



Prophecy in Perspective

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An Email Newsletter

Our Times - *Prophecy in current events*

***"But evil men and impostors will grow worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived."
(Paul's warning to Timothy, 2 Timothy 3:13)***

As we stand on the brink of another New Year, I feel the Lord has impressed on me the need to ask you to focus on three key words this year: ***Discernment, Watchfulness, and Purity***. We should never conclude that God is somehow out of control of things in the world even as confusing as things seem to be. God is unfolding His wonderful plan of redemption and every event is being brought together in such a way as to further unfold God's purpose in Jesus Christ. Yet, as Christians, we need always to seek to grow in discernment of the times. This is so we can be encouraged to see just how God is working and it is also for us to give a clear warning to those who will listen how the Lord is going to return at any time. It is imperative that they make a decision of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and receive Him as personal Savior. In this first section, as we seek to grow in discernment, I want to offer an example of the need for discernment in the study of Biblical Prophecy and of the times we are living in today.

There are several sects in the Muslim religion, but two stand out. One is called the ***Sunni*** and the other is called the ***Shiite***. If we are going to be discerning as Christians in the year 2012, and stand in defense and support of Israel, we need to understand what these differences are. I believe the differences are very significant for the Christian's understanding of prophetic fulfillment in the world. I also believe there is evidence that we have a President who may be inclined preferentially toward Shiite Muslims over Sunni. There are also significant political implications when understanding the differences between these Muslim traditions.

I related in the last edition of *Prophecy in Perspective* how I have noticed that President Obama does not seem to have much to say regarding Iran. I began to think it was rather odd that he speaks out freely about the so called "Arab Spring" in the Middle East, yet had little to say, and certainly did little to encourage the popular uprisings in Iran against Shiite president Mahmud Ahmadinejad and the Shiite mullahs in control there. Recently, our President's giving up our high tech stealth drone to Iran without a fight seemed strange to me. Again, also recently, the sudden withdrawal of all of our military troops from Iraq also leaves that fledgling, predominantly Sunni country vulnerable to aggressive and Shiite lead Iran. Recall further that Ahmadinejad believes in the coming of the Twelfth Imam who is supposed to deliver the world over to Islamic rule. So, I began to research to see what might explain the preferential treatment that our President seems to be affording Shiite led Iran. I was surprised that even among Muslims themselves there seems to be a strong suspicion that Mr. Obama may indeed be a Shiite Muslim.

What is the difference between the two sects of Islam: ***Sunni*** and ***Shiite*** (Shi'ite)? What is the significance Biblically and prophetically? In his book, [What in the World is Going On](#), David Jeremiah gives an excellent background to the founding and development of Islam that every discerning Christian should be aware of. He also explains the difference between ***Sunni*** and ***Shiite*** forms of Islam:

According to Islamic tradition, the founder of Islam, Mohammad, was born in Mecca (in present-day Saudi Arabia) in AD 570. Mecca was a thriving center of religious pilgrimage, filled with numerous temples and statues dedicated to the many gods the Arabian people worshipped at the time.

Mohammad's father died before the prophet was born, and his mother died when he was six years old. He was raised by his paternal grandfather, grew up to become a camel driver and then a merchant, and at the age of twenty-six, married a wealthy caravan owner named Khadija. Khadija was forty years old and had been divorced four times. In spite of her age, she and Mohammad had six children together...

Mohammad worked in professions that brought him into contact with a number of Christians and Jews who caused him to question the religion of his own people. He was forty years old and meditating in a cave outside Mecca when he received

his first revelation. From that moment on, according to his testimony, God occasionally revealed messages to him, which he declared to the people. These messages which Muhammad received throughout his life, form the verses of the Qu'ran, which Muslims regard as the divine word of God.

In the seven-century Arabian world of Mohammad, the people worshipped more than 360 different gods, one for each day of the lunar year. One of these was the moon god, the male counterpart to the female sun god. The moon god was called by various names, one of which was Allah, and it was the favorite god of Mohammad's family. As Dr. Robert Morey explains, "The literal Arabic name of Muhammad's father was Abd-Allah. His uncle's name was literally Obied-Allah. These names...reveal the personal devotion that Muhammad's pagan family had to the worship of Allah, the moon god."

As Mohammad began to promote his new religion, it was only natural that he would choose to elevate the moon god, Allah, and declare him to be the one true God. His devotion to Allah was single-minded and fierce, and in establishing and spreading his religion of Islam, Mohammad slaughtered thousands of people who resisted conversion. As his instructions to his followers show, there was no subtlety in his evangelistic technique. Abd El Schafi, an expert on ancient Muslim scholarship, informs us: "one of Muhammad's popular claims is that God commanded him to fight people until they became Muslims...All Muslim scholars without exception agree on this."

Opposition in Mecca forced Mohammad and his followers to flee to Medina in AD 620, where he became the head of the first Muslim community. In AD 631 he returned to Mecca, where he died the following year. **At his death, the Islamic community became bitterly divided over the question of who would be Mohammad's successor. Even today that division survives in the two Islamic sects, now known as Shi'ite and Sunni.** Conflict between these sects is one of the major stress points in Iraq and throughout the Islamic world.

At the death of Mohammad, the group we know as the Sunni followed the leadership of Abu Bakr, Mohammad's personally chosen successor. The Sunni now comprise about 90 percent of the Islamic world. They believe that Muhammad's spiritual gifts died with him and that their only authority today is the Qu'ran. The Baath party of Saddam Hussein was part of the Sunni sect.

The Shi'ites maintained that Mohammad passed on a legacy of personal authority in addition to the Qu'ran, called the Hadith, as author Winfried Corduan explains:

The Shi'ites, on the other hand, identified with Muhammad's son-in-law Ali, whom they saw as possessing a spiritual endowment directly from the prophet. The Shi'ites believe that their leaders, the imams, have authority on par with the Qu'ran. **It is the Shi'ites that believe that the Twelfth Imam went into concealment hundreds of years ago and continues to live there until he returns as the Mahdi...the Muslim Messiah!**

When Abu Bakr succeeded Mohammad, he and his successors launched *jihads* (or holy wars) that spread the religion of Islam from northern Spain to India and threatened Christian Europe. Christians resisted the threat, and a series of wars followed that drove the Islamic invaders back into the Middle Eastern countries, where they still dominate. Their zeal to have their religion dominate the world has not diminished, however, and it remains a threat to all who do not maintain vigilance. (What in the World is Going On?, Ten Prophetic Clues You Cannot Afford to Ignore, by David Jeremiah, published by Thomas Nelson, pp. 76-78)

With this background we have a better idea of how to understand the movements and beliefs of Islam and of how these beliefs affect the behavior of its adherents. We can further understand the work of the powers of darkness in our day that are seeking the destruction of the nation of Israel. I have wondered if Mr. Obama was either a Muslim outright or one who sought to observe and hold to beliefs of both Islam and Christianity at the same time. This is an approach not unheard of in our day. A growing number of people are opting for adhering to two or more faiths at once. This practice is called **syncretism**, and combines appealing elements of different religions into one. I have spoken also in previous issues on the increasing syncretistic trend which many call *Chrislam*. It is at once both sad and scary to realize that Christians actually think they can belong to both the Christian faith and the Muslim religion at the same time. There are those among the so called "insider movement" that teach converts to Christianity to stay in their religion. Such is the current state of things in these days of growing biblical ignorance, unbelief and church apostasy. Yet, we are called to make a difference by standing against these trends with the truth of God's Word during this Church Age.

I have not read of any other prophecy teacher commenting on whether Mr. Obama may be influenced by a Shiite beliefs. I was surprised to see that there is a growing number of Muslim leaders and writers who suspect that our President may be a Shiite Muslim. In my research I have found that some from among the Shiite branch of Islam believe that Mr. Obama is the forerunner of the great Mahdi which Shiite prophecies predict will appear in the latter days. Certainly there is a love-hate attitude on the part of many Muslim leaders toward President Obama. Islamic journalist, Nizar Al Samaraee has an interesting perspective toward Mr. Obama and his confused religious convictions which Mr. Al Samaraee believes are clearly affecting his policy positions. Mr. Al

Samaraee is under the conviction that Obama is actually showing partiality to Iran's Shiite Muslims. This is a position that I have held for some time now.

The following is another rather lengthy quote which I hope my readers will patiently read and consider. This is an article from a Forbes publication in the Middle East called *Al-Watan News*. It gives an objective viewpoint that I believe is helpful for readers of *Prophecy in Perspective* to better understand President Obama's religious and thus political tendencies. I have included part of Mr. Al Samaraee's article on how Shiite led Iran seeks to overthrow the Bahraini kingdom and Mr. Obama's response to this situation from the view point of this Muslim journalist:

The Iranian Project to Overthrow the Bahraini Kingdom - A Great Phase in Gulf History

Al Samaraee: "The White House has ignored the suffering of Iranian Sunnis but gives way to sedition in Bahrain"



The Iraqi political analyst Nizar Al Samaraee was amazed over Obama's speech in front of AIPAC (American Israel Public Affairs Committee) on May 18, 2011. In his speech, President Obama ignored the suffering of Iranian Sunnis banned from practicing their rituals in their mother country while he has given way to generate sedition in Bahrain by demanding that Bahraini Shiites should be free to practice their rituals.

Al Samaraee has confirmed that Bahrain's struggle to stand against Iran's colonial plan (to overthrow and take over Bahrain) will make history in the Gulf... (He goes on to say regarding

President Obama's apparent preferential considerations for the Shiites as well as his unwillingness to clearly renounce Shiite led Iran's overt efforts at conquest and expansion):

"Every human being has the right to adopt the religion she or he likes, which both the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) and the Holy Koran have secured...And it rarely happens that some people may willingly adopt a new religion because of personal reasons. But mass population shift from (one) religion to another should certainly be linked to social problems such as poverty and aspiration for a better life.

However, a human being will experience a state of unrest if he *unwillingly shifts* in his childhood from (one) religion to another because of family pressure. Thus, in his adolescence, he will suffer from an internal conflict because he is torn between two different identities and it is therefore hard to predict his reactions in adulthood.

President Barack Hussein Obama is of a Shiite Muslim father from Kenya and of a Christian white American mother. So, he must have been influenced in his childhood by both Islam and Christianity and must have experienced this conflict between both parents' wishes, each one willing that Obama would adopt his/her religion. This conflict went on and came to a head when Obama settled in Indonesia and was exposed to the religious curriculum at school there. Obama was under a religious schizophrenia...

Obama who is the president of the first (greatest) super power suffers from a religious schizophrenia although he tries hard to hide it. So he gives way to the causes of sedition in Bahrain...(and) demands that the Shiite in Bahrain should feel totally free to pray as if Obama were unaware...(that) Bahrain never prohibits anyone from praying and practicing his religious rituals.

Does Obama really feel the nostalgia towards his father's religion? Is it a previous political and religious pact that pushes Obama to be close to Iran?...Bahrain is working hard to reveal Iranian greediness to attack it. This needs some sacrifices to protect the whole region against any Iranian invasion.

Has the Shiite case in Bahrain become the sole case for Obama? Is Obama more interested in Bahraini Shiites than the Bahraini king and government? And why has Obama ignored the suffering of Iranian Sunnis who are prevented from practicing their rituals although they represent 35 per cent of the total Iranian population? Is Obama driven by his early childhood complexes? (from *Alwatan News*, Forbes, Middle East, <http://www.alwatannews.net/en/post.aspx?id=SSOfnwQEUnf7P3Ujd9tAmA==>)

As we embark on another year, 2012, remember that discernment in these politically heated and heady days goes far beyond considerations of political party, race, financial, or educational background. The real important matters are what regards the spiritual convictions of those we place into leadership, whether over our country or over our churches. It is vital that we know as best we can where a potential leader, whether President, Governor, Mayor, Pastor, boss etc., stands with God. A Christian needs to

resolve in his or her own conscience what person he/she feels they can support for President or for any other political position. But I believe it is important nonetheless for us to know where they stand regarding their faith. In these days, silence or ambiguity regarding a candidate's or President's view of faith are not an option. If Christians demand to know what a candidate's *political policies* are then let them also demand a religious accounting as well. As Christians, we should let the Word of God, and not the news outlets and political talk shows frame the important considerations. We must not leave the candidates' religious views out of the equation.

A man or woman is what their faith or their religious conviction is. This is why the Word of God is clear about the spiritual state of the leaders over Israel and the other nations that affected Israel. If faith was important to God in political leadership, then I believe it should be important for us as Christians to be discerning as to our political leaders as well as our church leaders as to where they stand with God, Jesus Christ, the Gospel, and the Bible. For President Obama, we need to pray that the Lord will give him clear understanding of the Word of God and of the claims of Jesus Christ. Pray that his focus will glorify God, that he will be convicted to articulate clearly the importance of Almighty God in our nation's life and of his personal life. Also pray that Mr. Obama will move to protect the unborn as well as biblical, traditional marriage. There are many things to pray for, and we need to be faithful as Christians to do so. For all those who are in political leadership in our nation, we are commanded to pray for them as a ***"minister to you for good" (Romans 13:4)***. "When Paul wrote (these words to the believers in Rome), Nero was in power. Nero cruelly persecuted Christians. Yet Paul exhorted the Roman believers to submit to Nero's authority, because the authority was ordained by God Himself." (New King James Study Bible, p. 2307)

As the days of the coming of the Lord draw near we can be sure that the religious convictions of political and Christian leaders will grow more and more confused, undefined, and heretical. The Scripture clearly predicts ***"evil men and impostors will grow worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived" (2 Timothy 3:13)***. With these false teachers, and after the rapture of the church, according to the prophet Daniel, in the latter days, a world leader will arise as a king who ***"shall do according to his own will: He shall exalt and magnify himself above every god, shall speak blasphemies against the God of gods and shall prosper till the wrath has been accomplished...He shall regard neither the God of his fathers nor the desire of women, nor regard any god; for he shall exalt himself above them all" (Daniel 11:36-37)***. By that time, people will have so rejected God's Word and grown so dependent upon the hand outs and education of government that they will believe the lies of the Antichrist without hesitation. In view of these prophecies, we need to be diligent this year to grow in discernment by following Paul's exhortation which he gave to his spiritual son Timothy:

"But you must continue in the things which you have learned and been assured of, knowing from whom you have learned them, and that from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work"(2 Timothy 3:14-17).

The Church Today - Doctrine and Prophecy Today

***"Watch therefore, for you do not know what hour your Lord is coming."
(Jesus warning to his disciples, Matthew 24:42)***

If you were to ask the typical Christian today what they should watch for, you might get many different answers. Yet a simple and straightforward reading of Scripture will show that we are to watch for the Lord Jesus to come at any moment to snatch His church suddenly away to heaven to be with Him. There will be many favorite theological controversies that Christians will like to engage in during these closing days of the Church Age. But the rapture of the Church will change the subject for all those who are distracted by all their favorite debates.

As we seek to grow in spiritual and biblical discernment in 2012 let's also seek to grow in watchfulness, because Jesus is the center of our focus. We need to waste no time witnessing to others of how Jesus Christ came to die for sinners. We should commit to a thorough reading through of the New Testament several times this year. Growing in the Word will bear the fruit of growing discernment and watchfulness for you. This watchful attitude will bring you an unusual confidence in the transforming truths of the Word of God.

We are hearing of many false teachings regarding the coming of some special leader such as the Muslim Mahdi. Much is being made of the Mayan Calendar's ending in December of 2012. There are trends today to combine Christianity with other religions which will prepare for the apostate global church of the Great Tribulation. We may expect these satanically inspired predictions and false

teachings to increase in number and popularity as we draw closer to the Lord's predicted return. Jesus was clear about this in Matthew 24:1-14. Yet, we as believers in the true Messiah can rest in the calm assurance that our Lord will return at any moment. Prayerfully determine by God's power to make watchfulness for the Lord your priority in these opening days of 2012. Remember, Jesus can return at any moment! Be discerning, be watchful, and be pure...

Upward Call - How to walk in view of Prophecy

"Therefore, since all these things will be dissolved, what manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness...?"

(Peter's question to watchful Christians, 2 Peter 3:11)

Jesus prophesied that in the days just prior to His return: ***"And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold" (Matthew 24:12).*** In his epistles to the churches, the Apostle Paul clearly set forth the importance of the believer's spiritual and moral purity as members of the Church. In 1 Timothy Paul writes: ***"Now the purpose of the commandment is love from a pure heart, from a good conscience, and from sincere faith, from which some, having strayed, have turned aside to idle talk..." (1 Timothy 1:5-6).*** Real love in the Church comes from a ***"pure heart."*** Could it be that the unloving attitudes that we often see in churches today arise out of life styles practiced by Church members that are characterized by iniquity? Since our Lord connected the abounding of iniquity in the latter days with growing cold in love, I believe that spiritual and moral purity are vital for the Church to truly love the Lord, each other, and the lost. The real problem with the Church at Ephesus in the book of Revelation was that they left their first love (Revelation 2:5). Leaving our first love of the Lord Jesus Christ is the result of spiritual and moral compromise. Compromise is what the Church of the latter day is known for (Revelation 3:15-16). Disunity, unloving attitudes, disputes, neglecting of teaching truth, evil motives and much more mar growing numbers of churches today. The solution is to prayerfully repent of our moral and spiritual compromises with the world, the flesh and the devil, and to return to the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ over our personal lives and over our churches. God will open great doors of opportunity to believers who walk in spiritual and moral purity in these latter days! (Revelation 3:8)

We must face the fact that paganism is growing in America and pagan and obscene practices are invading the lives of Christians. Consequently, paganism is flooding into Christian fellowships. How a Christian walks and talks seems less important to many today than simply fitting in. Paul predicted that ***"in the latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits..." (1 Timothy 4:1).*** Yet, this does not mean that they are leaving the churches when they come under such deceiving influence. To the contrary, many are staying and teaching and writing books which reflect their "emerging" new truths. Unscriptural practices like living together outside of marriage, homosexuality, abortion, drinking, gambling, use of profanity and pornography are being revisited by church members with abandon.

Many today are hearing truth from their church pulpits while going home and reading and watching obscene and unclean material that should not be put before the eyes of a child of God. For growing numbers of the members of the Body of Christ, their practice of cohabitation outside of the bonds of marriage is helping to bring spiritual uncleanness into the church services, Bible Studies and prayer fellowships. The problem is not that some in the Church are sinning, but that some are not repentant of sin and are not convicted that their sinful and pagan practices have devastating consequences upon them, their families, and the family of God. This is why there is a need for spiritual and moral purity in the lives of individual Christians and for them to take responsibility for the purity of other believers. When the Body of Christ seeks spiritual and moral purity, then those who are trapped in the bondage of sin can find loving encouragement through the Church who will welcome them into the shelter and caring fellowship of the Lord's house.

As we grow in our walk in the Lord, I believe we will grow in our purity and godliness. This is not simply following rules, which is mere legalism. Growing in purity comes directly through our full surrender to the Lordship of Jesus Christ and allowing Him to live His life in us and through us. This means that we, by His power, put away any thing or attitude or practice that we know is not pleasing to God. This is what Paul meant when He wrote to the Romans:

"Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect."

(Romans 12:1-2)

Paul spoke to the Romans and he speaks to us about how we should give up living under their own power and live ***discerningly, watchfully*** and ***purely*** in 2012 through the transforming power of the Lord by the fullness of His indwelling Holy Spirit.

*May God richly bless you and your family in this coming
New Year
as we serve Him and await the coming of our Lord and Savior,
Jesus Christ!*

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*(Note: If you would like to interact with Dr. Downing concerning this newsletter, views, etc. you can "blog" with him at **prophecyinperspective.com**. If you would like to subscribe to this newsletter at no charge, please send your email address to: **sgdowning@bellsouth.net**. Also, you can purchase his latest book, "Good News From a Far Country", a study in the book of Daniel [\$15] by contacting him.)*